

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 118640
ORIGIN SS-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /016 R

66011

DRAFTED BY: EA:NSILVER:KA

APPROVED BY: EA:KMQUINN

S/S-O: AWOTTO

-----240257Z 015382 /64

R 232135Z MAY 77

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 118640

EXDIS, EYES ONLY FOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OAKLEY

FOLLOWING REPEAT MANILA 7790 ACTION SECSTATE MAY 21, 1977

QTE C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 7790

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, US, RP

SUBJECT: IN WONDERLAND WITH IMELDA

1. MRS. MARCOS CAME TO LUNCH ALONE AND STAYED TWO AND ONE-HALF HOURS. WE TOUCHED UPON ALL THE PRIORITIES AND OTHER TOPICS AS WELL. THE ATMOSPHERE WAS EXTRAORDINARILY, THAT'S THE WORD FOR IT, EXTRAORDINARILY CORDIAL, EXCEPT FOR THE MANY EMBARRASSINGLY INVIDIOUS COMPARISONS WITH PREVIOUS AMERICAN AMBASSADORS. WE WERE REPEATEDLY REMINDED THAT TODAY'S LUNCHEON REPRESENTED THE FIRST TIME IN THE TWELVE YEARS OF THIS PRESIDENCY THAT SHE, OR PRESIDENT MARCOS, EVER HAD BEEN INVITED TO THE AMERICAN EMBASSY SOCIALLY ON A PERSONAL BASIS; ALTHOUGH SHE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THEY HAD

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BEEN INCLUDED, VERY INFREQUENTLY, IN SOME "EVENTS." THUS, MRS. MARCOS SAID, THE PRESIDENT WAS DELIGHTED WITH TODAY'S INVITATION, HAD EXCUSED HER FROM A PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT, AND WAS BRAGGING ABOUT IT JUST BEFORE LUNCH AT THE DEDICATION OF THE BULLETIN PRESS BUILDING.

2. I EXPRESSED MY DISMAY AT THIS NEGATIVE PERCEPTION OF THE

EMBASSY HERETOFORE. BUT SHE HELD FAST TO IT, ADDING THAT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY HAS BEEN CONSIDERED, AND CHARACTERIZED, BY THE PRESIDENT, HERSELF AND OTHERS AS THE "SANCTUARY OF THE OPPOSITION." I ARGUED THAT ANY EMBASSY SHOULD STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE OPPOSITION. SHE AGREED BUT SAID IT IS A MATTER OF BALANCE AND "FIFTY-FIFTY IS NO BALANCE IN A COUNTRY WHERE THE MAJORITY SUPPORTS THE GOVERNMENT."

3. MRS. MARCOS REITERATED MOST OF THE POINTS SHE HAD MADE DURING DINNER MAY 18 WITH PARTICULAR STRESS UPON PRESSURES MAKING THE PHILIPPINES "SCHIZOPHRENIC," UPON THE PRESIDENT'S, HER AND THE FILIPINO PREFERENCE FOR THE "RIGHT" (AMERICAN), AND UPON PRESIDENT MARCOS' BASIC COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS BROADLY UNDERSTOOD IN THE PHILIPPINE CONTEXT (SEPTEL). OBVIOUSLY HAVING DONE HER HOMEWORK, I.E., LISTENED TO THE TAPE I HAD SENT HER OF MY BRIEFING OF THE MANUFACTURERS HANOVER TRUST CO. GROUP (SEPTEL), MRS. MARCOS COMMENTED AT LENGTH ON INCOME DISTRIBUTION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT, POPULATION, POPULAR SUPPORT, AND SUCCESSION. SHE SAID THAT THE CURRENTLY WIDE DISCREPANCY OF INCOME IS NECESSARY AT THE PRESENT STAGE OF PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO ENCOURAGE MIDDLE-CLASS ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EFFECT CAPITAL ACCUMULATION, AS WAS DONE IN THE UNITED STATES BY THE ROCKEFELLERS AND FORDS. IN DUE COURSE, THE BENEFICIARIES WILL RETURN THE FAVOR THROUGH HIGHER TAXATION. MEANWHILE, UNPRODUCTIVE WEALTH IS BEING GIVEN THE SQUEEZE TREATMENT. SOMEWHAT DISENGENOUSLY, SHE NOTED THAT THE GOP FIGURE OF 4 0/0 UNEMPLOYMENT COMPARED FAVORABLY WITH SUCH FIGURES IN CONFIDENTIAL

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DEVELOPED COUNTRIES. WHEN I REFERRED TO THE PLIGHT OF THE SACADA ARGICULTURAL WORKERS, SHE RATHER AIIMIO# DISMISSED THE PROBLEM AS ONE THAT IS RESOLVED BY ECONOMIC SUPPORT WITHIN THE EXTENDED FAMILY SYSTEM. ON POPULATION, MRS. MARCOS EMPHASIZED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GOP FAMILY PLANNING AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS. WHILE RECOGNIZING THE PROBLEM OF PROVIDING MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT FOR THE INCREASINGLY LARGE NUMBER OF WOULD-BE ENTRANTS INTO THE LABOR FORCE, SHE EVIDENCED A GENERAL FAITH IN THE CAPACITY OF THE PHILIPPINE PEOPLE TO GENERATE THE NECESSARY SOLUTIONS. NOT SURPRISINGLY, SHE WAS DECIDEDLY OF A MIND THAT THE PHILIPPINE PEOPLE IN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY SUPPORT PRESIDENT MARCOS AS, SHE SAID, IS CONSISTENTLY DEMONSTRATED IN REFERENDA. "OTHERWISHE, HOW COULD WE HAVE STAYED IN POWER FOR THESE TWELVE YEARS?" CONCERNING SUCCESSION, MRS. MARCOS SAID THAT THE PERSONS, NOT MILITARY, WHO HAVE BEEN DESIGNATED TO MANAGE THAT TRANSITION WILL, IN THE EVENT, SOLICIT CANDIDATES AND SUBMIT THEM TO THE DECISION OF THE PEOPLE. "IT WILL NOT BE A MATTER OF BONG BONG, IMEE OR MRS. MARCOS.

INDEED, I HAVE TOLD THE CHILDREN THAT THEY MUST LEARN TO STAND ON THEIR OWN FEET, AGAINST THE TIME WHEN BEING A MARCOS WILL BE A POSITIVE DISADVANTAGE."

4. OTHER TOPICS IN THIS GRAB BAG INCLUDED THE LIBYANS, AND THE PRESS. AS TO THE FORMER, MRS. MARCOS CHARACTERIZED QADHAFI AS A HIGHLY INTELLIGENT, UNSOPHISTICATED YOUNG MAN, IDEALISTIC EVEN NAIVE, OUT OF THE DESERT, SURROUNDED BY A HOST OF UNRELIABLE RADICALS EXERCISING PERFIDIOUS INFLUENCE. SHE CONSIDERED FOREIGN MINISTER TURAYKI THE WORST OF THE QADHAFI ADVISORS. TOO OFTEN, SHE RECALLED, QADHAFI WOULD AGREE IN A PRIVATE DISCUSSION, AND HIS SUBORDINATES WOULD TURN HIM OR IT AROUND. SHE NOTED THAT PRESIDENT MARCOS' AND HER COMMUNICATION WITH QADHAFI REMAINS OPEN, AND THAT THE PRESIDENT CONSIDERS THE RECENT QADHAFI STATEMENT AT THE CURRENT ISLAMIC CONFERENCE IN TRIPOLI TO HAVE BEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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MODERATE.

5. MRS. MARCOS WAS RELATIVELY RESTRAINED IN COMMENTING ON THE BANEFUL EFFECTS OF THE WESTERN PRESS. TODAY SHE SEEMED MOST INTERESTED IN SUGGESTING THAT THE EMBASSY COULD BE HELPFUL IN ORIENTING THE WESTERN PRESS MORE POSITIVELY TOWARD THE PHILIPPINES. IN THIS REGARD, SHE COMMENTED THAT IN THE PAST THE EMBASSY DID THE OPPOSITE AND SEEMED "TO BE INCITING THE CORRESPONDENTS TO A RAGE AGAINST US." I EXPRESSED MY SURPRISE AT THIS COMMENT AND ADDED THAT ATTEMPTS TO MANIPULATE THE WESTERN PRESS IN EITHER DIRECTION WOULD BE HAZARDOUS AND MOST PROBABLY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, AND THAT OUR APPROACH AND TO REMAIN OBJECTIVE AND PROFESSIONAL OR WE WOULD LOSE ALL CREDIBILITY.

6. MRS. MARCOS COMMENCED HER DEPARTURE WITH EFFUSIVE THANKS FROM HERSELF AND IN BEHALF OF PRESIDENT MARCOS FOR "THIS EXTRAORDINARY SHOW OF PERSONAL WARMTH AND HOSPITALITY." SHE SAID THAT SHE SAW THE EFFECT AS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW AND AUSPICIOUS CHAPTER IN RELATIONS WITH THE EMBASSY AND WITH THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, A RELATIONSHIP UNMARRED BY "ARROGANCE." SHE VERY MUCH WELCOMED OUR NEW DEPARTURE, WHICH SHE CALLED ORIENTAL AND BOUND TO BE VERY EFFECTIVE, AND WHICH SHE CHARACTERIZED AS "MOST SOPHISTICATED WITH THE HUMILITY OF REAL STRENGTH."

7. COMMENT: FOR ALL THE HEAVY AND HEADY TOPICS WITH THEIR POTENTIAL FOR CONTENTION, AND DESPITE THE DIRECTNESS OF LANGUAGE, THE ATMOSPHERE THROUGHOUT THIS

DISCUSSION WAS MOST CORDIAL, OCCASIONALLY EMOTIONALLY WARM, WITH MUCH GOOD HUMOR AND MANY ASIDES ON ART, LITERATURE AND OTHER SUBJECTS OF MUTUAL INTEREST.

8. I WAS PLEASANTLY SURPRISED WITH HOW VERY WELL THE
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MEETING CAME OFF. WE ALL (MRS. MARCOS, MY WIFE AND I) HAD DONE OUR HOMEWORK AND WERE TRYING VERY HARD. IT WORKED, THIS TIME AT LEAST. I REALIZE THAT THERE ARE LIMITATIONS AND HAZARDS IN ALL OF THIS--NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS THE BUILDING OF ILLUSIONS AND THEIR EVENTUAL COLLAPSE. I DID MAKE IT CLEAR TO MRS. MARCOS THAT EXPECTATIONS SHOULD NOT BE INFLATED, THAT RHETORIC AND FORM WHILE NOT WITHOUT SIGNIFICANCE, COULD NOT SUBSTITUTE FOR SUBSTANCE. ALSO, THAT I WOULD BE NOBODY'S PATSY WITH THE PRESS OR ANYBODY ELSE, BECAUSE THAT WAS NOT MY WAY AND, IN ANY EVENT, IT WOULD DESTROY CREDIBILITY AND THEREFORE UTILITY. NONETHELESS, THERE MAY WELL BE DIFFICULTIES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE "NEW RELATIONSHIP" THAT WE CHOSE TO AGREE UPON TODAY. HEDGING, I EXTRACTED HER PROMISE TO CHECK WITH ME BEFORE BELIEVING ANYTHING UNTOWARD ABOUT US POLICY OR THE AMERICAN EMBASSY, AND SHE INVITED ME TO DO THE SAME THROUGH HER OR DIRECTLY TO THE PRESIDENT WHENEVER I HAD SIMILAR CAUSE FOR CONCERN. LET'S HOPE, AND WORK, FOR THE BEST. STULL UNQTE VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, POLITICAL STABILITY, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 23-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE118640
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: EA:NSILVER:KA
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770184-0359
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770527/aaaaaxdw.tel
Line Count: 201
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Message ID: c3a5bf8b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2402829
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IN WONDERLAND WITH IMELDA
TAGS: SHUM, US, RP, LY, (MARCOS, IMELDA)
To: BANGKOK
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c3a5bf8b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009